

SPECIAL NEWS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

Fall 2006

Fall is finally here, bringing with it, memories of school shopping, the smell of chalk (now often dry-erase boards!) and upcoming eligibility and IEP meetings. There is no better time than now to think of your child's future. This quarter's newsletter focuses on finding ways to help your child grow.

Happy Leaf Raking!

Kellie and Jennifer



Please feel free to call Kellie McKeefery (302-995-8617) or Jennifer Donahue (302-424-7300) with ideas and suggestions of topics of interest. Reach us via-mail

kellie.mckeefery@state.de.us and

jenniferl.donahue@state.de.us

Stay and Plays

Stay and Play Centers provide developmental activities for children birth through 3 years of age. Led by a Certified Parent Educator, parents and children are invited to play together, listen to a story, learn new songs, finger plays and network with other families. Stay & Play Centers are part of the Parent As Teachers Program. They are located statewide and FREE to families.

For more information on activities call Whitney Jenkins in New Castle County (302)454-5955, or Anna Scovell in Sussex County (302)856-5239 or Carmen Gallagher (302)697-4545 for Kent County locations. Also, you may wish to contact your Service Coordinator for a calendar.

Anger and My Child



By Yvonne Nass

Can we raise a child without getting angry or responding to his anger? Of course not! Anger is an emotion that most caregivers do not want to see or deal with. Emotional development is part of a child's growth. So, what do we do? We can all agree that expressing emotion is healthy. We do not have to teach a child how to express. They know from birth. When a baby is distressed it will be shown to you holistically through frowns, pouts, stiff body, fists and screams or cries. It is a caregiver's response that teaches a child to: depress or suppress the emotion, use the anger to get what he wants or have permission to express the anger appropriately and move on to the next emotion, which is usually love or joy. Helping your child grow emotionally healthy means to teach and model methods of expressing anger that are not hurtful. Here are some ideas:

- Create a **Do** List instead of saying **Don't**.
- **Don't** - hit; kick; throw objects; spit; scream hurtful words; etc
- **Do** - Use your words: "I am so mad;" punch a pillow; stomp your feet; cry; yell loudly; have a tantrum; etc.

Judging anger as "bad" thing creates the feeling of guilt. Recognizing that it is not the emotion that is bad it's the expression that can be hurtful helps caregivers to relax and teach the healthy expression of emotion.

Yvonne Nass, Parent Education Consulting Services
www.YvonneNass.com

Open Family Forum, October 19, 2006

We want to give you what you want, so join us and let your voice be heard!

From 6:30-8:30 at Easter Seals in New Castle, DE, we will hold an Open Family Forum that welcomes informal discussion, future ideas for family forum meetings and the opportunity to meet other families with special needs children. Help plan your forum services!

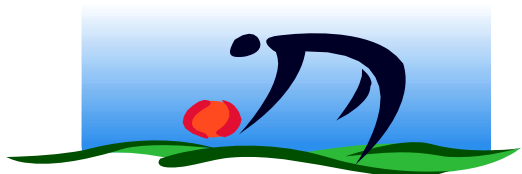


Delaware Has Its “I” on the Ball!

By Samtra Devard

The Goal: *Inclusion for children with disabilities.*

The Dream: *All early care and education programs are high quality, available to all children, including children with moderate/severe disabilities, and ensure necessary supports and services to promote meaningful participation.*



Inclusive childcare settings are believed to be the best way to maximize the potential for a child with a disability. The best minds in education and early childhood intervention are promoting inclusion as the best way to provide services to children with special needs.

A team of educators, early intervention professionals and families representing Delaware attended the Inclusion Institute at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill in July. People from across the country came to learn about the best practices for making inclusion work and strategies that can be employed by childcare centers.

Delaware has established a work team that will be advancing the concept of inclusion over the next year. There is much work to be done. Informing families about inclusion and how to go about determining the best setting for their child will be critical in making inclusion work.

Another critical element will be training for professionals to arm them with strategies and the knowledge to address the needs of children with disabilities and their families to ensure that the experience in that inclusive setting is meaningful.

Also important will be changing minds. Systems change will be crucial to address changes needed in how services and special education delivered.

All of these groups have a role in making inclusion work. Working with these groups to knock down the barriers that exist will be important to the success of inclusion.

If you want to learn more about inclusion or if you want to find out how to have your child placed in an inclusive childcare setting with typically developing peers, please contact your service coordinator.

Healthy Delawareans with Disabilities

Invest in a healthier future! All you need to do is select one of the telephone numbers listed below and schedule an interview to complete a Health and Disability Survey over the phone.

Next, someone from the University of Delaware will call you at a time that is convenient for you, so that you can complete this survey from the comfort of your own home. The surveyors will respect the confidentiality of your family name. You can expect the survey to take just 20-30 minutes, and you'll also be *compensated for your time!

We need the input from families like you, who have children with special health care needs. The valuable information that you provide will be used to develop Health and Wellness initiatives for children living with a disability and will provide Delaware Health and Social Services with the information necessary better serve our community. Feel free to forward this information to Delaware residents of any age who have a disability.

*** Respondents will receive \$15.00 per telephone interview. To schedule an interview, select your county and call:**

New Castle

Ilka Riddle

Phone:

(302) 831-8186

Alisha Raiford Hall

Phone:

(302) 369-2186 ext. 255

Kent

Thomas Kelly

Phone:

(302) 744-9600

Sussex

Beth Collins

Phone:

(302) 934-8031



Can an Inclusive Preschool Help My Child with Special Needs?

There is an old expression that children have brains like sponges, because they are capable of rapidly absorbing and processing new information. Brain development occurs at rapidly between birth to kindergarten— at a speed unmatched by any other stage of life. Your child's early experiences literally shape the neural connections in their developing brain! With that in mind, there's no better time than the present to think of ways to improve your child's future!

Research and controlled studies show that early education can greatly improve many children's social, emotional and intellectual education; especially that of children with mild to severe developmental delays. Family experiences, early child-care providers and academic settings each play an important part in shaping a child's mind.

How Can Inclusive Preschool Help My Child?

First, keep in mind that school is not just about reading, writing and arithmetic! Child-care environments are the foundation that shapes social and emotional health, which follows into adulthood. Social and emotional development helps children with developmental delays by:

- Boosting self-confidence
- Stimulating intellectual curiosity
- Building stronger communication skills
- Creating opportunities for friendship among children

And, these characteristics can and do, enhance a child's academic growth in mathematical, problem solving and language skills.

How Can I Help Prepare My Child for Inclusive Preschool? Families Can Help Through Effective Parenting Practices Like:

- Interactive play
- Positive reinforcement and discipline
- Exposure to early interventions specialists and education
- Consideration of your child's enrollment in a pre-k environment that challenges your child's current skill set

Inclusive Pre-K— It's a win-win situation.

How Inclusive Pre-K Helps Others:

- Enhances professional development and requirements for educators
- Bolsters social/emotional growth of typically developing children
- Long term, positive impacts for the entire community including increased sharing of resources from various agencies, benefiting all children
- Sends a message to the community that all children are valued and welcomed

Thoughts to Consider When Selecting an Inclusive Learning Environment . . .

- The education and training of the professionals
- The school's educative philosophy
- Is there specialized intervention and tailored learning to gain the skills each child needs for kindergarten? Are specialized therapists scheduled regularly?
- Is staffing adequate to class population?
- Will the team within the school maintain a close working relationship with families, so activities in the learning environment can be integrated in the day to day activities of home?
- How long is the school day? Studies indicate that learning was further enhanced through the positive effects of extended or full preschool days verses half-days.
- Is the program equipped to meet my child's special needs?

So, the question remains, should you send your child to an inclusive preschool learning environment? To answer that question, take time before your child transitions to familiarize yourself with learning environments in your community. See what these programs have to offer and make an educated decision based on your child's unique abilities, never underestimating his or her capacity to succeed.

References

[Pre\[k\]now.org](http://Pre[k]now.org)

Helping Young Children to Succeed: Strategies to promote Early Childhood Social and Emotional Development, Julie Cohen, Ngozi Onunaku, Zero to Three; Steffanie Clothier and Julie Poppe; NCSL, 2006.

Is More Better? The Effects of Full-Time vs. Half-Day Preschool on Early School Achievement, Kenneth B. Robin, Ellen C. Frede, & W. Steven Barnett NIEER, 2006.

Inclusive Child Care Is..., Growing Together Portfolio, 2006.

The Family Voice – Loud and Clear

By Samtra Devard

Delaware is emerging better than most states with respect to partnering with families in the early childhood intervention system. Belief in the “family voice” and efforts to meaningfully involve families by key agencies is by and large the major reason for this important and positive change.

Delaware’s children with special needs are now reaping the benefits of having families in key roles throughout the early intervention system.

It had been a widely accepted belief among progressive thinkers in the early intervention field and is now an evidence-based practice that involving families in all aspects of early intervention make for a more effective and successful service delivery system.

Delaware has a history of using families in many ways over the years. The Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), which is the advisory committee for Delaware’s Part C - Birth to Three Program, has always met the mandated requirement of partnering with families. We are now seeing Delaware moving beyond that which was mandated and proactively involving families in other capacities.

Families have positions on many prestigious committees such as: The Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, The Developmental Disabilities Council, legislative task forces, grant award teams, and more.

A new organization called Delaware New SCRIPTS has connected families with the higher education community to share their stories with pre-service professionals.

Families have been invited into the classrooms at the University of Delaware and Delaware State University to share their experiences. The level of involvement can vary from a guest speaker at one class to being an integral part of the curriculum as a co-instructor with the assigned professor. Data is being collected from the students of these sessions and all surveys are indicating that having a real-life family dealing with a child who has special needs enhances learning of the theory in their text books. Students are reporting that hearing family stories make their classroom learning come to life.

The family perspective is being sought after like never before. In-service professionals are also seeking the family-voice. In-service professionals are also inviting families into their circles. Families are being asked to participate in training, hiring, conferences, instructional workshops and on work teams.

Real-time feedback from families about their experiences with services for their children and their experiences with educators in their school districts has raised the bar. No longer are practices that are yielding unsuccessful outcomes for children with special needs being left unchecked. Families have begun to embrace their new roles and have begun to voice their thoughts in ways that are constructive and helpful to systems change efforts.

¹⁰⁰ The Family Voice — Loud and Clear, continued...



Delaware has begun to collect its own data to prove what we know. Data around family involvement and the impact on professionals and systems change efforts has already begun to show positive results. Hearing directly from families has empowered professionals already in the field to think beyond the limits that often accompany a disability diagnosis. Hearing from families that the bar is being set too low for their children is eye-opening for many professionals.

In addition to being able to evaluate the benefits of hearing the family voice, data are able to be obtained around practices such as inclusion. Questions are able to be designed to get the pulse of respondents about the barriers to inclusion in classrooms. This type of data can be quantified and more importantly used to change minds.

Who better to lead the effort to change minds and change systems than the parents of the children being serviced?

For more information about increasing family involvement, please contact Delaware New SCRIPTS, Michelle Lamers,

Parent Coordinator at 1-888-547-4412 or mmlamers@aol.com

Sussex Family Network Training for Support Parents

The Sussex Family Network will offer training for families designed to enhance skills in offering support to other families. Family life is stressful, especially when one or more of the children have disabilities. Families may experience isolation and frustration. There is a need to build supportive communities for families.

This training will offer you the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to actively participate as a member of your community, supporting other families.

The training will cover topics such as:

- How to listen as an act of support
- Ways people grieve and cope
- Information on disabilities and resources available for families
- Strategies to develop positive relationships that respect confidentiality and diversity
- And more . . .

If you are interested in participating in the training, call or e-mail Jennifer Pulcinella, Sussex Family Network Coordinator at (302) 423-5925 or SussexFamilies@aol.com. There is no cost to participate in this training. After participating, parents may be members of the Sussex Family Network, offering support to other families.

